



# The Pine Cone



Lone Pine State Park

Volume 4, Issue 2

## The Urban Naturalist

By Mary Beth Pendley

From crocodile hunting to meerkat mayhem, it seems as though every time I turn on the television there seems to be a host of new programs to choose from that, at least attempt, give me a front seat to the most spectacular drama found in nature. Some of these shows do a pretty good job at making me feel less guilty about spending a sunny afternoon parked lazily in front of the “tube” under the guise of education, and others make me wish that I had never wasted my time in such an embarrassingly sloth-like fashion. Either way, however, I inevitably end up wishing that I had spent the time outside *really* discovering nature. But when you don’t have a whole day to spend traipsing the countryside, finding a great spot to investigate close to home can sometimes seem like a challenge.

Since my arrival here in Flathead Valley, I’ve met many people who share with me the same ancient desire to be part of the natural world, but who, like myself, by chance and circumstance have found themselves to be part of Kalispell’s urban ecosystem. It’s easy then for the television to become our tutor

and ourselves budding naturalists well versed in the daily dramas surrounding the happenings of a family of African Rodentia. But, when it actually comes right down to it, do these programs really teach us that much about the world around us?

I’ve found, and believe myself to be in the good company of many fellow amateur and professional naturalists, that the easiest and most effective way to learn about the natural world is to start close to home. Flathead Valley offers its residents opportunity to experience nature down every city street and up every mountain trail. Whether it’s sparrows in a parking lot or a cougar on a mountainside, our little nook of the world is teeming with life and just waiting for us to discover it.

So, this spring I would like to invite you to turn off the television and join me here at Lone Pine State Park, where our mission is to provide a place for all fledgling naturalists to spread their wings. Take a peak inside this issue to find lots of great ways that Lone Pine can help you become an Urban Naturalist!

## Go Green with the *Pine Cone*

Thank you to all those who responded by mail or e-mail in regard to signing up for the new eco-friendly electronic *Pine Cone*. As of the summer 2009 edition, this newsletter will be published electronically. If you would like to continue to receive printed copies of the *Pine Cone*, you must contact us by phone or e-mail no later than April 30, 2009. Otherwise, you will be taken off the mailing list. Also, if you would like to be added to our list to receive an electronic edition, please e-mail us at the address shown to the right.

**Don't let yourself be taken off the mailing list! Call or e-mail us today and tell us which version you would like!**

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### Special Points of Interest:

- We're looking for talented and resourceful folks to join our team. Check out p. 4 to learn about volunteering at Lone Pine.
- Celebrate the return of spring by joining us for one of our exciting new adult workshops. See p. 3.
- Lone pine is now offering several short interpretive programs to spark your interest! Turn to p. 2.

## Wildlife Watch

Several weeks ago, members of Lone Pine's staff were surprised early one morning when they looked off the back deck of the Visitor Center. There, just below the deck, stood approximately twenty white-tailed deer! Lone Pine's staff aren't the only ones to have been surprised by the seemingly large number of deer that appear to have popped up in the park this past winter. Several park visitors have reported seeing unusually large numbers of deer around the park in the past several months. So, why did so many deer call Lone Pine home this past winter?

First of all, white-tailed deer typically have very small home ranges of about .25 to .5 square miles (Lone Pine State Park is just under .5 square miles). Over the past several years, Flathead Valley has experienced relatively mild winters and park the supported around a dozen full-time residents. This year, however, even though the snowfall came late, it came fairly heavily to most of the hills and mountains surrounding our valley. The deer that normally wintered at slightly higher surrounding elevations were more likely inclined to migrate to Lone Pine's low elevations to spend the winter.



*White-tailed deer at Lone Pine State Park (photograph by Karen Nichols)*

With slightly less snow depth and great amenities like a mixture of forest cover and open grasslands, along with plenty of winter browse such as conifers, snowberry, serviceberry, and Rocky Mountain maple, Lone Pine was an attractive winter home for neighboring deer. As spring comes again into the park, and the snow begins to melt off the mountains, you can likely look forward to having fewer deer sightings as our visitors return to their higher elevation home ranges and our resident deer once again have the park to themselves.

## Go Wild with Lone Pine!



Have you ever touched the fur of an otter or tracked a deer through the forest? If not, Lone Pine State Park has the answer for you! Join a park naturalist at the Lone Pine Visitor Center for one of our new programs, part of the new *Montana Wildlife* series. Programs are approximately 30 minutes long and are great opportunities to learn more about Montana's wildlife legacy. Fun for the whole family!

*All programs are FREE and meet at the Lone Pine Visitor Center at 11:00 a.m. Dates shown below.*

### Scats and Tracks, April 4

Often the only glimpses of wildlife that we see when we are out hiking are the traces they leave behind. Learn how to identify many of these clues and maybe even take a short nature hike!

### All About Bears, April 18 and May 16

One of our most famous, and often most misunderstood, residents, bears are an iconic reminder that Montana still remains somewhat wild. Learn about these fascinating mammals, and discover ways that you can help keep conserve these magnificent animals.

### Skins and Skulls, May 2 and May 9

You can learn a lot about an animal just by looking at its fur or skull. Join a park naturalist to examine animal remains and learn about some of the mammals that make Lone Pine State Park their home.

*Image courtesy of MTFWP*



## Wildflower Walks



*Lupine at Lone Pine State Park ( photograph by Karen Nichols)*

Here at Lone Pine, the sun is growing warmer by the day and that can mean only one thing: its time for the return of Lone Pine's Spring Wildflower Walks!

Date:	Saturdays, May 30 - June 27
Time:	10 a.m. & 1 p.m.
Cost:	FREE
Location:	Meet at the Lone Pine Visitor Center

## School Field Trips

Calling all teachers, youth group leaders, and homeschool parents! Are you looking for a fun and exciting way to bring your curriculum alive? Lone Pine State Park is proud to continue its tradition of offering high quality and enjoyable field trips throughout the school year. Lone Pine offers a variety of field trip topics, all of which are designed to meet state curriculum standards. While the spring season is well under way (and completely booked!) it's not too soon to start planning ahead for next fall.



*For more information, or to book a field trip for next fall, please contact:*

*Mary Beth Pendley  
at 755-2706, Ext. 2  
or via e-mail at [mpendley@mt.gov](mailto:mpendley@mt.gov)*

## Spring Adult Workshops

Come welcome the return of spring! This year, Lone Pine State Park kicked off its spring series on March 28 with a fun and informative workshop about outdoor survival. We were pleased to welcome back Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks Game Warden Frank Bowen, who led participants earlier this spring in an exciting program that focused on tips and techniques for survival in the cases of outdoor and wilderness emergency situations. To continue its spring line-up, Lone Pine will be hosting two new workshops for adults 16 and over. We invite you to participate in these fun and casual group learning opportunities.

*All workshops will meet at the Lone Pine Visitor Center. Dates and workshop descriptions are listed below. For more information, contact Mary Beth Pendley at 755-2706.*

### **Date to be announced: Lake Fly-fishing**

Join Flathead's chapter of Trout Unlimited for a fun day of fishing at Foy's Lake. Trout Unlimited members will provide folks with an introduction to lake and pond fly-fishing techniques as well as a chance to catch "the big one". Personal flotation devices are required for everyone, and waders are recommended. While participating in this program only, you are exempt from being required to purchase a Montana fishing license.

*Time to be announced*

### **Saturday, May 23: Edible and Medicinal Plants**

Herbalist Tom Tracy, of Swan Valley Herbs, has been introducing people to the nutritional and medicinal values of local plants for over two decades. Join him at Lone Pine for this fun and informative workshop, which focuses on plant identification and use.

*Time: 10:00 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.*



*Image courtesy of MTFWP*





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## Lend a Hand...

Become a volunteer or docent at Lone Pine State Park! We are looking for hard-working, creative, and fun individuals to join our dynamic team. No matter what your age or background is, Lone Pine has a place for you! Whether it's grounds work, leading a nature walk, or helping out in the Visitor Center, there's always plenty to do! Most positions require no experience, and training will be provided. Volunteers are needed to help out with specific projects, while docents are needed to fill long-term positions. So, join us today and make a difference! For more information, contact



Mary Beth Pendley at 755-2706, Ext. 2 or drop by the Visitor Center.

## Celebrate!

Come celebrate your next event at Lone Pine State Park! The the newly remodeled Visitor Center offers a modern community room complete with a large-screen television, surround-sound, and LCD projector and screen, making it the perfect place to hold your next meeting, reception, or family reunion! For those wishing to hold an outdoor event in the park, there's a rustic picnic shelter available for reservations that includes picnic tables, a charcoal grill, and nearby fire pits, perfect for your next family barbecue or company picnic. Both facilities offer your guests spectacular views of Flathead Valley and over five miles of trails! So, next time you're holding an event, make it a memorable one at Lone Pine State Park. For more information call 755-2706, Ext. 2.

### Rates:

Community Room-  
\$75/less than 4 hours  
\$125/4 hours and over

Picnic Shelter-  
\$75/day